

Mathew Barr: Sorry, but can you give us a little background? There were a couple of attempts before to incorporate Sneads Ferry as a town.

Harvey Bradshaw: That's true. There were two attempts before. Out of that, we got the legislature to pass a law saying that North Topsail Beach could not cross the Intracoastal Waterway and incorporate Sneads Ferry. As long as that law is on the books, we are protected from incorporation by North Topsail Beach. At the present time, the third attempt to incorporate has taken place. Some citizens organized and have pushed for incorporation. A separate group against incorporation has also become active at that time. It's been a divisive issue in the town. You can see blue "No Incorporation" signs and red "I support the Village of Sneads Ferry" signs. At the present time, the proposal has gone to the state legislature in Raleigh. Their committee is considering the application by Sneads Ferry. The likely outcome of that is that when they meet the criteria that the state has set up to incorporate, they will put it on the ballot. There will be a referendum. The citizens will then vote and decide if they want to incorporate or not. That's the one thing everyone agrees on in Sneads Ferry, that we should have a referendum. We should let the people speak and see if incorporation is desired by the community as a whole.

MB: Well, can I ask – in other words – so, people want to incorporate theoretically because they are worried about getting annexed by another – a nearby incorporated town.

HB: That is one of the key reasons. The other reason is a lot of people think that if we're incorporated, we'd have more control over our local issues, such as access to the water for commercial fishermen and those kinds of things that are issues here but not so important countywide and statewide, that we would have more control of our own destiny if we had our own governmental system right here in an incorporated community.

MB: Well, now I have also heard that some of the people behind the incorporation might want to – are involved with the development side of the whole picture.

HB: Well, that is – if you are incorporated, you'll have your own inspectors, your own zoning, those kinds of things. The developers, a lot of them want incorporation. You might influence how quickly the sewer is allocated to you. We have a countywide sewer system under an organization called ONWASA, the Onslow County Water and Sewer Authority. They are a very powerful entity now. They have a board that determines where the sewer goes next. Some people feel that if we had an incorporated town here, that we might get sewer sooner. Therefore, that would help development and the developers to provide more homes and more buildings.

MB: Well, Harvey, I will not use this if you do not want to. But how – what are your feelings about it? Can I ask? I mean, [laughter] not to put you on the spot but I am kind of. But – I mean, I guess – now this – I mean, we do not need it – whatever you do not want me to use, we will not use, of course. But I mean my – I remember when we went to a meeting a year ago, I filmed it, about incorporation. I mean, it just seemed like the people for the incorporation. How do you think most of the commercial fishermen feel about the whole deal?

HB: Most of the commercial fishermen are dead set against it. They're independent free spirits who have made their living throughout on their own. They're against it unanimously, I think.

Most of the old-timers here in Sneads Ferry – we have the one sign, "If you don't like Sneads Ferry the way it is, go back where you came from." That's one attitude from some of the old-timers. My own feelings are that if there is no threat of annexation by another town, and unless there's an overwhelming reason, I am – again, I do not believe that it can be run on the five cents – on the dollar tax system that's proposed by the pro incorporation people at the current time. Every other town in the county takes about thirty-eight cents on the dollar to run their town. Of course, nobody wants to increase taxes. But my own feelings are if there's no threat of annexation and we have a well-run county – Sheriff Brown runs – our crime rate is no higher than North Topsail Beach which has tremendous additional taxes to pump sand on the beach and try to save the beach over there. This community has survived a long time on its own. Somewhere down the road though, with the increased development in the economic pressures of condos on the water and no room for commercial fishermen, we may have to incorporate. I'm just not for it at the present time.

MB: Well, do you think the commercial fishermen – I mean, they are free. But do you think the commercial fishermen tie together incorporation with development basically?

HB: I think the commercial fishermen are free and independent businessmen. They survive by knowing their job and knowing the oceans and waterways and being able to catch fish and sell them. But they have no control. If all the fish houses are gone, where are they going to market their crop? That kind of thing. They're not organized. We don't see any way to provide unless the state helps us out. I understand Senator Basnight has a law passed to appropriate \$20 million to provide for some of these things. But we've got to have someplace for the commercial fishermen to operate and market their crop. I don't know if there's an organized effort here to do that or not.

MB: So, I guess as a wrap-up question then, do you think that in a way this whole struggle on whether to incorporate or not is really in a way a referendum on the future and the identity of this town? I mean, will it be able to be a – continue to be a fishing town, at least for part of its identity? It seems to me, like in a weird way, that is what this thing is about, to an extent. In other words, a lot of people who are for incorporation do not seem to have a lot of care for the fishermen, I think. I do not know.

HB: Well, I have that same inclination. Of course, when the fishermen came and protested about incorporation, they wrote something into their charter saying, "We'll try to get some grant money for you." But that was the extent to which they went. So, I agree on that. I don't think that the pro-development, pro-incorporation, pro-maximum density of condos on the water, people have the fishermen's best interest at heart. I think this community has been a fishing community for hundreds of years. This is our heritage. This is what the heart of Sneads Ferry is all about. I would definitely not want to see us lose that. Brunswick County has lost every bit of their commercial fishing industry over the past ten years. We don't want to see Sneads Ferry lose it here. This is part of our heritage.

MB: Excellent.

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